

Navy Tags News Clippings 'Secret'

United Press International

The Navy has been classifying as "secret," published newspaper stories about a communications project it is building in northern Wisconsin, it was learned yesterday.

Although newspapers from Milwaukee to Superior have been writing about "Project Sanguine" for months, the Navy considers the disclosure of information about it dangerous to national security.

The official Navy view is that the information printed in the newspapers justifies those stories being classified as "secret," second only to "top secret" in seriousness and whose unauthorized disclosure is punishable by a prison term.

The Navy also has stamped newspaper clippings on Project Sanguine "secret nofor," meaning that foreigners, even if they

have a Defense Department clearance, cannot see the articles.

In addition, the clippings carry the notation, "Group 1. Excluded from automatic downgrading and declassification." This permits Pentagon officials to ignore a congressionally inspired directive aimed at reducing the Government's stockpile of classified information by calling for automatic removal or lessening of security labels after a prescribed number of years.

Project Sanguine, if and when completed, has been described as a method of providing instant communications between naval commands in the United States and ships, submarines, planes and bases anywhere in the world.

The Navy has released information about testing but has kept silent about the ultimate purpose of Project Sanguine. However, there's

been no end of details from the Navy itself—at briefings for state and utility company officials—and from Rep. Alvin O'Konski (R-Wis.).

O'Konski, who represents the area and is especially privy to defense information because of his high seniority on the House Armed Services Committee, is a cheerful and unabashed booster of Project Sanguine.

He has been touring his district, painting a glowing picture of the prosperity it will produce and the 10,000 new jobs he says it will bring to residents of the economically depressed area.

A member of O'Konski's staff said the Congressman had been particularly careful not to disclose any facts about Project Sanguine that the Navy did not want disclosed. On the other hand, when reporters have tried to talk to Pentagon officials about material publicly

mentioned by O'Konski they were told that the subject was classified.

The project also has prompted expressions of worry from conservationists and agricultural scientists who want to know what effects the unique form of high energy used in Sanguine will have on vegetation and soil. Sen. Gaylord Nelson (D-Wis.) has been seeking answers from the Navy to some of these questions.

Among the Navy-supplied information Nelson got was a packet of eight reproduced newspaper clippings, each one bearing the "secret" stamping.

During a briefing, Nelson aides asked the Navy why. A spokesman reportedly conceded that it looked a little silly, but the Navy did not want to be in the position of publicly talking about classified information, regardless of who has printed it.